

9. September 1985

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Gorbachev's Opening Gambit

1. General Secretary Gorbachev's orchestration of the 28 August Time interview and of a 3 September meeting with US Senators was designed to maintain the favorable impression he has worked to establish in Western eyes and at home as a man of vigor, toughness, and substance. He has not staked out specific positions on US-Soviet policy issues different from those taken by his predecessors or by other Soviet leaders. Nor has he incurred political risk by tying his reputation to one or another meeting outcome. But he does seem determined to put his stamp on foreign as well as domestic policy, and he has in effect opened a competition with the President in terms of portraying an effective public image. [REDACTED]

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2. Gorbachev's remarks and general approach bespeak a decisive singleness of purpose. He was relentless in trying to engrave into the record his definition of how the meeting should be shaped--arms control should be its centerpiece and SDI the prime target of discussion. He was bold in attempting to create pressures for change in US policy, striking a posture of regret, disappointment, and concern that the Administration was trying to avoid serious talks and asserting that the meeting should be "designed for negotiations." He did all he could to raise expectations and dramatize the meeting as an international event, implying that if it did not result in new agreements in some areas, it would be a failure and raise East-West tensions that he said had reached an "explosive" point. He stressed the importance of the meeting repeatedly in talking with the Senators. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

The President

4. Gorbachev presented oddly mixed views of the President. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In his interview, Gorbachev several times expressed hope that the President would adopt an approach that would help make the meeting successful. Also, he claimed to have discerned "very positive elements" in some public statements made by the President, citing remarks about the inadmissibility of war, the non-winnability of a nuclear war, and the absence of any US ambition toward military superiority. By referring invidiously to Presidential advisers and other senior US officials, he implicitly cast the President as the most reasonable as well as the decisive shaper of US policy, and as a man capable of statesmanship and wisdom. [REDACTED]

5. At the same time, however, he seemed to allow an edge of bitterness and even sarcasm about the President to show through in his interview. He attacked positions that he knows have been taken or approved by the President (we "hear" the meeting is aimed "only" at establishing an agenda for the future; we have never accused the United States of being an evil empire). More directly, in alleging that the Administration adopts a consistently negative posture in response to all Soviet positions and characterizes them as merely propaganda, he complained that "responsible" people "should not conduct themselves in that way in respect to their opposite numbers" and then told an anecdote about a former senior Soviet official who uttered knee-jerk negative responses to questions when awakened during cabinet meetings. When asked specifically by Time about his impressions of the President, he gave the evasive answer that Soviet respect for him derived from Soviet respect for the American people who elected him. [REDACTED]

6. On balance, judging from his remarks, it seems that although Gorbachev will deal correctly with the President and may exchange either warmth or anger in kind, he will enter the discussions with a negative impression of the President's past approach to Soviet affairs and with a distinct skepticism. He noted in the interview that his references to positive Presidential remarks were drawn from 1983 and 1984, and he led off his written answers with a stark declaration that the bilateral relationship had taken a turn for the worse since he had agreed to meet the President. We suspect this attitude derives from assessments he has received from various advisers, including the most senior Soviet specialists on US affairs. We believe that some of these specialists (including [REDACTED])

[redacted] argued in 1980 that Soviet leaders should not prejudge from campaign rhetoric what President-elect Reagan would do once in office and then, feeling betrayed when Presidential statements and policies in 1981 appeared to belie the advice they had given their principals, reversed course and presented bleak depictions of the Administration. Along with then Foreign Minister Gromyko, they may have helped formulate the unusually pessimistic formal appraisal issued over General Secretary Andropov's name in 1983 four weeks after the KAL 007 shootdown (no one now can have any "illusions" that the Administration's policy will get better) and shaped Gorbachev's perceptions as he rose to prominence in recent years. [redacted]

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7. Gorbachev pointedly referred in his interview to several American officials by name, complaining especially about statements by Ambassador Tower (who he claimed wants to prevent any US-Soviet agreement) and Presidential Assistant McFarlane (whose 19 August speech he called a "lecture"). He also complained that anti-Soviet feeling was running rampant in Washington, [redacted]

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#### Domestic Political Position

8. There seems little reason to question the straightforward conclusion that Gorbachev's open, self-confident approach rests comfortably on a solid political base. He referred in appropriately collectivist Soviet style to his leadership colleagues but did not seem in any discernible way to be defensive about his political flanks. Although he expressed hope that something good could come of his November meeting with the President and sounded ingenuous in painting an optimistic picture of human nature (surely God has given us "enough reason" to improve relations), his tough words in complaining about past US policy seem sufficient to immunize him from any charges of basing his expectations on unrealistic illusions. [redacted]

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9. The self-assured image Gorbachev displayed in the interview and with the Senators adds another piece to an already considerable accumulation of evidence that he is a strong leader. Achieving movement in foreign affairs is no easier than making changes internally, however, and he does not seem to be impulsive or a loner. So he is unlikely at the November meeting to agree to something that he had not considered and discussed with other top Soviet leaders. But if he has taken those steps and decided to move on an issue, either before or after the meeting, he is likely to be able politically to make an offer or implement a step effectively and have the support of the other Politburo members. [REDACTED]

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### Personal Style

10. By talking with obvious (and probably genuine) openness about the reasoning and perceptions underlying his opinions, Gorbachev may well have been making a conscious effort to engage his target audience and create a sympathetic atmosphere. This effort is enhanced by his apparent naturalness and tendency to analyze matters at some length. Indeed, his decision to grant the interview at all is testimony to an activist preference and a determination not to stand pat or wait for others to initiate actions. His populist forays among segments of the Soviet populace and readiness to showcase his wife and family seem to reflect a calculated appreciation of the importance of his image and its value as a political tool. He knows he can make a strong impression, and he can adjust his approach either to make it forceful or, if he wishes, to put his audience at ease.\* [REDACTED]

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11. Gorbachev's directness has a disarming dimension. He audaciously asserted in the interview that he and other Soviet leaders looked "self-critically" at Soviet actions in the world to see if they were "somehow connected" with US-Soviet tensions and could not find a link. Similarly, he excused his domestic populist image by saying that the Soviet press "can do anything," thereby implying he had no control over his public image-building. He applied this trait in his interview to the substance of US-Soviet relations and the forthcoming meeting by using his own splashy interview as a platform for demanding that the Administration stop accusing Moscow of propagandizing! [REDACTED]

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\* Attached to this memorandum is a copy of the nominating speech Gromyko gave in March to the Communist Party meeting that elected Gorbachev to be General Secretary. It has the appearance of being extemporaneous and seems to be revealing about Gromyko's assessment of Gorbachev's style and its relationship to his political success. It was not published as widely as such nominating speeches have been in the past. [REDACTED]

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12. Granting that Gorbachev does bring a new directness to the top Soviet leader's image, one cannot overlook more complicated, even contradictory aspects of his style or his Russian characteristics. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] in his interview he bristled with offense at alleged US depictions of the USSR as a "backward country of yokels" and made no effort to hide his desire for US recognition of the USSR as a political equal to the United States. He also made a point of telling the Senators that the USSR would not be intimidated. [REDACTED]

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#### Next Step

13. Gorbachev probably feels satisfied with the impact of his opening gambit. The magazine interview will resonate in West Europe, and he may hope that by meeting with the Senators he has done what he could to influence a key political body that can force changes in the Administration's defense programs. His move is being followed up immediately by an Arbatov visit already under way in the United States that will no doubt provide extensive assessments of the current US mood and of the impact of his interview and meeting. He is unlikely, however, simply to wait for Presidential or other high-level reaction before continuing the task of positioning himself to maximum advantage for the November meeting and engendering pressures on Administration policies. Additional public or private initiatives probably are planned for coming weeks, perhaps even before Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's visit to the United States in September and Gorbachev's visit to Paris in early October. [REDACTED]

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### Gromyko Nominating Speech

PM251623 Moscow "Materialy Vneocherednogo Plenuma Tsentralnogo Komiteta KPSS" in Russian (Signed to Press 14 Mar 85) pp 6-8 -- FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

["Comrade A.A. Gromyko's Speech" from Political Literature Publishing House brochure "Materials of the Extraordinary Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, 11 March 1985"]

[Text] Comrades! I have been instructed to present a proposal for the examination of the CPSU Central Committee plenum on the question of the candidacy for CPSU Central Committee general secretary. The Politburo has come out unanimously in favor of recommending the election of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev as general secretary. (prolonged applause)

I would like to convey to the members of the CPSU Central Committee, candidate members of the Central Committee, members of the Central Auditing Commission, and all those present the content of the discussion of this question and the atmosphere in which the discussion took place.

First of all, the idea was emphasized that all Mikhail Sergeyevich's activity in implementing our domestic and foreign policy confirms that he is worthy of election as CPSU Central Committee general secretary. It was stressed that he has tremendous experience in party work. First at the kray level, then here, centrally, on the Central Committee: first as secretary, then as Politburo member, he led [vel] the Secretariat, as is known. He also chaired Politburo sessions in the absence of Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko. He conducted himself brilliantly, without exaggeration.

What else was stressed? Alongside his party experience -- and this is an invaluable gift -- it was stressed that he is a man of principle, a man of strong convictions. Anyone who has met with him and discussed the relevant questions can confirm this. I personally can confirm it. He always keeps attention focused on the nub of the question, its content, on the principles; he states his position frankly, whether or not it is to the liking of his interlocutor. He states it with directness, Leninist directness, and it is up to his interlocutor whether he goes away in a good mood or not: If he is a real Communist, he should go away in a good mood; incidentally, that did happen, and this too was stressed.

During the discussion of this question in the Politburo, it was stated that Mikhail Sergeyevich is a person of keen, profound intelligence, and anyone who knows him or has met with him even once will confirm this. After all, it often happens that it is difficult to examine questions, domestic or foreign, if you are guided by the law of "black and white." There can be in-between colors, in-between levels, and in-between decisions which accord with the party line. This was stressed unanimously. And for him, this has been and is the main criterion in assessing the position of this or that comrade or this or that institution, or in assessing whatever problem is at issue.

And this must also be said. Perhaps this is rather clearer to me, by virtue of my service, than to certain other comrades. He grasps very well and rapidly the essence of the processes taking place outside our country, in the international arena. I myself have often been struck by his ability to rapidly and accurately grasp the essence of the matter and draw conclusions -- the correct, party conclusions.

Mikhail Sergeyevich -- this is also well known -- is a man of broad erudition both in education and in work experience. Of course, all this makes it easier for him to find the correct solutions. And another illustration: If what was taking place in this auditorium now was, say, a scientific forum, most likely everyone would say: This man knows how to approach problems analytically. That is the absolute truth. He has brilliant ability in this respect -- he can divide a question into all its component parts before drawing a conclusion. Not only does he analyze problems well, he makes generalizations and draws conclusions. Politics sometimes requires not simply the ability to analyze a question or subdivide it -- it will then just stand still -- but also the ability to draw conclusions, so that our politics can then adopt these conclusions. He demonstrated this many a time at Politburo sessions and sessions of the Central Committee Secretariat.

Moreover the comrades unanimously stated that Mikhail Sergeyevich has a party-minded approach to people and a great ability to organize people and find a common language with them. This is not given to everyone. Whatever you want to call it, a gift of nature or a gift of society, or rather, a gift of both -- it is not given to everyone. In any case, not to everyone to the same degree. He has this quality.

Moreover, we are living in a world in which, figuratively speaking, various telescopes are trained on the Soviet Union, and there are many of them -- big, small, over short and long distances. And perhaps more long-distance than short-distance ones. And people look to see if they can eventually find cracks of some kind in the Soviet leadership. I assure you that on many, many occasions we have come across such instances and observed them. If you like, we have witnessed discussions and guesswork conducted in a whisper or a half-whisper: In some places abroad, people are eager to see differences of opinion in the Soviet leadership. Of course, this did not originate today or yesterday. This phenomenon has been observed for many years. The Politburo's unanimous opinion is: This time too, we, the party Central Committee and Politburo, will not allow our political opponents any satisfaction on this score. (applause)

On very many occasions Mikhail Sergeyevich has expressed the opinion -- and he has done so in the Politburo -- that we must, so to speak, keep our powder dry. The corresponding decisions of our congresses, Central Committee plenums, and the Politburo orient the party and people toward this policy.

Mikhail Sergeyevich's opinions are always notable for their maturity and persistence, in the best sense of the word -- party persistence. He always upholds the view that the holy of holies for all of us is to struggle for the cause of peace and maintain our defense at the necessary level.

The ability to perceive the main components and to subordinate what is secondary to them is a strong characteristic of his. This ability is an asset, and a great asset. So the conclusion drawn by the Politburo is the correct conclusion. We have in Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev a figure on a large scale, an outstanding figure, who will fill with dignity the post of general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. (prolonged applause) I would like to express confidence that, like the Politburo, the Central Committee plenum will unanimously support and approve the proposal. (prolonged applause)